(vi) Indian companies will become more competitive in Belgium since exemption from social security contribution in respect of their employees substantially reduces costs.

Government has intitiated the process for negotiating similar agreement with the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Germany, Norway and Bulgaria. The Gulf countries, unlike Belgium, have no compulsory social security tax mandated by law. As such, there is neither a demand nor a proposal to sign such agreements with the Gulf countries. However, bilateral Memoranda of Understanding on labour are being signed with the Gulf countries.

Indian medical practitioners in Britain

1091. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:
SHRI AMAR SINGH;

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a large number of medical practitioners of Indian origin who moved to Britain in 1970s and 1980s following job offer in that country to meet shortage of medicial professionals at that time, are now being forced to come back consequent upon the adverse High Court decision ruling that refused a judicial review of changes in U.K. immigration Rules;

(b) if so, the number of Indian Medical practitioners in Britain who are facing hardships at present; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (c) The British Government has implemented new immigration and employment regulations on 7th March, 2006, under which all non-EU doctors will hereafter require a work permit to work in the UK. However, work permit will be given against specific vacancies for which suitable UK/ EU doctors are not available. The new regulations abolished the Permit-Free Training (PFT) category through which most Indian Medicial Graduates (IMG) worked in the UK. The new regulations were confirmed by an order of the British High Court on 9th February, 2007. The Indian High Commission had taken up with the Government of UK the issue of allowing the Indian

doctors to apply for the first round of recruitment under the system of current Modernising Medical Careers launched by UK Department of Health. The Department of Health has agreed to consider the request of keeping the first round open for Indian doctors. In the first round, NHS proposes to recruit around 10,000 doctors. Further efforts are on to ensure that IMGs are also allowed to appear unconditionally for the second round of recruitment that is likely to take place in April 2007.

(b) Approximately 10,000 doctors are facing hardships at present due to the implementation of the new regulation.

Convening of PBS

†1092. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any suggestion for selecting ten place in the world for convening Pravasi Bhartiya Sammelan after the intereval of every two years;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) the suggestions received in the Pravasi Bhartiya Sammelan held in January, 2007 and the decisions taken thereon; and

(d) the steps being taken by Government to implement the decision taken in the conference?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) Pravasi Bhartiya Divas 2007 focused on India's social development challenges including: education, healthcare, women, youth and investment. Many suggestions were recevied in these areas with emphasis on developing public private partnerships and establishing institutional mechanism to channelise the resources of Overseas Indians into the social development process of India; and making economic transformation of the country more equitable with benefits of development

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.